

**Mount Vernon
City Council
Study Session
June 29, 2016**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Boudreau at 7:06 p.m.

Present: Mayor Boudreau, Councilmembers Fiedler, Hudson, Hulst, Lindquist, Molenaar, Quam, and Ragan

Staff Present: Public Works Director Bell, Community and Economic Development Department Director Hyde, Assistant Public Works Director Love, Senior Planner Lowell, City Attorney Rogerson, Donovan

Citizens Present: 43

NEW BUSINESS

A. Public Hearing – Comprehensive Plan Land Use, Housing and Transportation Elements along with the Vision Statement

Ms. Lowell reviewed the process to date which includes a survey, a notice mailed with the City utility bills, a radio interview and forty-seven (47) meetings. The Comprehensive Plan is the framework for adopting the Mount Vernon Municipal Code. A Public Hearing was held at the last Planning Commission meeting. She explained that there will be public input tonight but no action will be taken. The Resolution is requesting Council input that will be taken back to the Planning Commission for consideration prior to the next Planning Commission public hearing. This process is for the sake of expediency and is only allowed for this specific topic/process. Ms. Lowell recognized several people who have been active in the process thus far including Liz McNett Cowl, Kirk Johnson, Anneliese Van-Sherman, Dan Mitzel, Joan Penney, Steve Powers, Skagit County and the members of the Citizens Advisory Committee. There have been 383 letters submitted for the record.

Ms. Lowell introduced Victor Salemann who discussed the Complete Streets policy and ordinance. Complete Street standards include trails, service level standards, medians, bike lanes and other elements making a two lane road complete. Grants are available that require a Complete Streets ordinance.

Mayor Boudreau opened the public hearing for the Transportation element.

1. Ken Birkel, Mount Vernon resident, asked Council to prioritize projects and suggested Fir Street from LaVenture Road to Waugh Road, a signal or roundabout at Waugh Road and Division Street and pedestrian right of way/safety signage near the hospital.
2. Liz McNett Cowl, Mount Vernon resident, spoke in support of Complete Streets and noted that the State program is an award and not a grant program. She

recognized the complete street policies currently in effect and has twelve pages of comments for Council to review. She commented on funding and enforcing pedestrian right of way laws.

3. Katie McNett, Mount Vernon resident, spoke in support of the Complete Streets ordinance and a pedestrian and bicycle master plan.
4. Kirk Johnson, Mount Vernon resident, spoke about walking and bicycle trails within the City and pointed out safe and dangerous areas. He is in favor of 25 mph speed limits.

There being no further comments Mayor Boudreau closed the public hearing.

Council discussed funding from the Transportation Benefit District (TBD), the State of Washington and the Federal government. Council will review the information submitted during the Public Hearing.

Mr. Hyde presented the Vision Statement.

Mayor Boudreau opened public hearing for the Vision statement.

1. Dan Mitzel, Mount Vernon resident, stated that the Riverwalk is nice but there needs to be physical access to the river and the Shoreline Plan is lacking.

There being no further comments Mayor Boudreau closed the public hearing.

Council is in agreement regarding the need for access to the Skagit River.

Ms. Lowell introduced the land use element by reviewing the buildable land statistics and legal requirements. The statistics are estimates and subject to change.

Councilmember Hulst pointed out that homes on septic systems connect to the City system as those systems fail and that falls into the "or" statement. Ms. Lowell added that clarification is possible.

Mayor Boudreau opened public hearing for the Land Use element.

1. Ken Birkel, Mount Vernon resident, addressed density within subdivisions, maps, accessory dwelling units and sewer connections.
2. Steve Powers, representing Catholic Housing Services, spoke about low income housing and the lack of buildable sites in Mount Vernon. He asserts there is a housing crisis for low income residents and that holding back development damages the quality of life for all residents. He recommends upzoning and increasing densities.
3. Balisa Koetje, Mount Vernon resident and member of the Citizens Advisory Committee, submitted documents to Council and spoke in favor of low income, senior and multi-family housing.
4. Joe Woodmansee, Sedro-Woolley resident and Mount Vernon property owner, discussed a lack of buildable land, multi-family development, upzoning and density changes.

5. Dan Mitzel, Mount Vernon business owner, agrees with Mr. Woodmansee and the study on buildable land. He commented on the Land Use buildable land analysis and stated it needs to be refreshed every year and maybe doesn't belong here, and recommends its removal.
6. Melanie Corey, representing the Housing Authority of Skagit County, agrees with Mr. Powers and feels that density and zoning are obstacles.

There being no further comments Mayor Boudreau closed the public hearing.

Ms. Lowell responded to Mr. Mitzel's comment regarding the buildable land information and clarified that the table is essential to the statistics and should not be used by appraisers. She added that the current statistics are based on actual information and is not methodology based and includes roads and wetland locations. This is a twenty-year document that uses the best available data. She further noted that it is a very conservative estimate and is a very high level analysis. There was a discussion regarding unit changes, zoning changes and consistency.

Mayor Boudreau opened the public hearing for the Housing element.

1. Carol Koepp, Mount Vernon resident, spoke in support of affordable housing and expressed appreciation for the article in the current Mayor's Newsletter regarding homelessness. She addressed temporary shelters and the services they should provide including medical and mental health services.
2. Kent Haberly, Mount Vernon resident and member of the Home Trust of Skagit County, commented on the need for affordable housing and the process of acquiring land.
3. Jim VanderMey, Mount Vernon resident and member of the Skagit Council on Housing, spoke about low income and elderly housing as well as the need for suitable land to build higher density dwellings.
4. John Piazza, Mount Vernon resident, made comments regarding multi-family housing.
5. Bill Hinkel, representing Community Action of Skagit County, thanked Mayor Boudreau and the Council for their support with regards to the imbedded social worker program. He brought forth statistics on vacancy rates for low income rentals and supports affordable housing.
6. Guillermina Bazante, Mount Vernon resident, spoke in supports of affordable housing
7. Martha Martinez, Mount Vernon resident, shared her personal story and the need for affordable housing.
8. Jorge Mantanera, Mount Vernon resident and member of the Citizens Advisory Committee, made comments about increased density for multi-family housing and suggested locations on East College Way for development.
9. Joan Penney, Mount Vernon resident, commented on the structure of the housing element overview, points of measurement and communication between City Council and the Planning Commission.
10. Ellen Gamson, representing the Mount Vernon Downtown Association and member of the Citizens Advisory Committee, thanked staff and Council and all the organizations, groups and people involved. She spoke about increased density and amenities that should be included with housing.

11. Dan Mitzel, Mount Vernon business, owner thanked Mr. Hyde for meeting with him to organize stakeholders regarding affordable and market rate housing. He would like Council to work with the community to address the zoning codes.
12. Melanie Corey, representing the Housing Authority of Skagit County, recognized the importance of this process and commends everyone involved. She is supportive of affordable housing for farmworkers, low income individuals, homeless veterans, students and seniors. She is in favor of multi-family housing and building up.
13. Sister Susan Wells, representing the Farm Workers Center, addressed the ethical component of housing and asked for decisions to be based on the human issue.
14. Kirk Johnson, Mount Vernon resident, commends Mount Vernon for accepting the lion's share of the housing population in Skagit County. He described the diverse housing types in the Maddox Creek development. He is in support of mixed housing including vertical and affordable housing.
15. Ken Birkel, Mount Vernon resident, asked Council to consider input from residents of existing neighborhoods before up-zoning. He would also like them to consider the transportation element.

There being no further comments Mayor Boudreau closed the public hearing.

Council discussed the rezone process that includes notices and public hearings for resident input. Council also expressed appreciation for the comments and letters submitted for consideration.

Mayor Boudreau made a request for staff to have information ready for review at next Wednesday's meeting.

Councilmember Lindquist moved to continue the Comprehensive Plan Land Use, Housing and Transportation Elements along with the Vision Statement discussion to July 6, 2016. Motion seconded by Councilmember Fiedler. Motion carried 7-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:16 p.m.

SUBMITTED BY:

Becky Jensen, Recording Secretary

ATTEST:

Alicia D. Huschka, Finance Director

APPROVE:

Jill Boudreau, Mayor